

Pinnacles National Monument upgraded to become America's 59th National Park

WASHINGTON, DC – President Barack Obama signed Congressman Sam Farr's (D-Carmel) bill, H.R. 3641, to create Pinnacles National Park today. Pinnacles becomes the 59th national park and the first on California's Central Coast. With its creation, California is now home to nine national parks, more than any other state.

"The Central Coast has long been recognized for our beautiful shoreline, where mountains meet the sea," said Congressman Sam Farr. "Visitors have traveled the world to see our coast but now they are going to come to also see our cliffs.

The park draws its name from the volcanic spires that were formed by the eruption of the Neenach Volcano over 23 million years ago. Established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt, the 26,000 acre Pinnacles National Monument is the 11th oldest National Monument in the United States.

The legislation passed both chambers of Congress unanimously because of its broad, grassroots support due to the positive impact it would have on the surrounding communities. Located in both Monterey and San Benito counties, the legislation had support from both Chambers of Commerce and Visitors Bureaus. Ken Burns, director of "The National Parks: America's Best Idea" also supports the legislation.

"By elevating Pinnacles National Monument to national park status we also elevate the region's appeal to potential visitors," Farr said. "These new tourists will spend their dollars at local businesses and ultimately be the driving force that helps this region between the two counties grow and eventually prosper.

The Pinnacles system is home to 149 species of birds, 49 mammals, 22 reptiles, six amphibians, 68 butterflies, 36 dragonflies and damselflies, nearly 400 bees and many thousands of other invertebrates.

Over 30 endangered California condors reside in the cliffs of the Pinnacles. Since 2003, the Park Service has been involved in the California Condor Recovery Program to re-establish California condors to the area. Additionally, the caves located in the new park are breeding grounds for the Townsend big-eared bat, a species of special concern.

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